

No. XIX.—EXTENSION OF THE HABITAT OF THE SAND SNAKE
(*PSAMMOPHIS LEITHII*).

The habitat of this uncommon snake, as far as was known when the third Volume of Mr. Boulenger's Catalogue appeared in 1896, was Sind, Cutch, Rajputana, and Baluchistan. On the 3rd December 1904 I obtained a good specimen near Rai Bareilly in the United Provinces, and to-day I have received the skin of another specimen from Major Magrath, 51st Sikhs, who obtained it near Thall Fort on the N.-W. Frontier (altitude 2,000 ft.). My specimen was a perfect female adult, 2 feet $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches long, the tail measuring $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The ventrals and subcaudals were 170+95. The anal entire. It was typical in every way. It contained a mouse "in gastro."

Major Magrath's specimen I have identified from the imperfect skin. It is an adult with the anal entire, and the ventrals 172. The tail is absent and the head shields also wanting. These characters, however, do not affect the diagnosis. In both these specimens the belly is creamy white laterally, with a saffron band occupying the median third of its breadth. This band is well defined by a series of red spots, or lines.

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DIBRUGARH, ASSAM, 25th May 1907.

No. XX.—THE PRAYING MANTIS.

Mr. A. A. Dunbar Brander, in Miscellaneous note No. 1 on page 1013 of Vol. XVII, tells us of a Mantis which "shed its skin like a snake and then proceeded to eat it, commencing at the tail," and he asks the reader to let him know if this process has been previously remarked with regard to the Mantis. As to the first part of the process I am able to answer in the affirmative, having observed the shedding of the skin last May. It seems to be a long established fact that the larvæ of the *Mantida* undergo several successive moultings, and the insect, Mr. Dunbar Brander is speaking of, was no doubt a larva. How often the different species are shedding their skins and at what intervals, I am unable to say. I have been observing a larva since the middle of May when it shed its skin for the first time in captivity. Since then no moulting has taken place and I am still waiting for a further development. As to the second part of the process, *viz.* the Mantis eating its own skin, I did not notice anything of the kind, and I doubt very much whether the larvæ will do it if they get something better and more substantial. I find my Mantis to be very voracious; of about ten flies it gets every day nothing is left, not even the wings. In May I kept several together in the same glass-case and I did not supply them with food. The consequence was that very soon they engaged in a desperate combat, not leaving off fighting till the strongest of them had succeeded after a few days in killing and devouring all the rest. Nothing seems to equal the ferocity of these animals.

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St. XAVIER'S COLLEGE, BOMBAY,
10th July 1907.